1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Foreword

About the Series

These case studies in cultural anthropology are designed to bring to students, 000
in beginning and intermediate courses in the social sciences, insights into the richness and complexity of human life as it is lived in different ways and in different places. They are written by men and women who have lived in the societies they write about, and who are professionally trained as observers and interpreters of human behavior. The authors are also teachers, and in writing their books they have kept the students who will read them foremost in their minds. It is our belief that when an understanding of ways of life very different from one's own is gained, abstractions and generalizations about social structure, cultural values, subsistence techniques, and the other universal categories of human social behavior become meaningful.

About the Author

Ronald Cohen received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of 114
Wisconsin in 1960. He has taught anthropology at the University of Toronto from 1958 to 1961, at McGill University from 1961 to 1963, and from 1963 to the present at Northwestern University where he is a member of the Program of African Studies and Associate Professor of Anthropology and Political Science. He has carried out fieldwork in Nigeria and in the Mackenzie Valley, Northwest Territories, Canada. He is interested in social and political change as well as problems of theory and method in the social sciences. Professor Cohen has published papers on aspects of Kanuri society and history, Athabascan culture change, and a number of theoretical and methodological problems in anthropology.

About the Book

This case study has a clear central focus. The author shows us how the vari- 121
ous sectors of Kanuri social life build upon and interrelate to the basic unit of Kanuri 128
society, the household organization. He claims the basic theory of their society is not his own but that of the Kanuri themselves as they have tried to explain their society to him. In doing so they continually refer back to the household. The household, or compound, is the basic political unit; groups of households link up to form wards, hamlets, villages, and districts. The economic system is dependent upon the household, since the business of getting a living is organized within it, and households link together through their head men to form larger organizations for the produc-

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Acknowledgments

The fieldwork on which this book is based has been carried out in two periods: one in 1956 and 1957 under the auspices of the Ford Foundation Area Fellowship Program, and again in the summers of 1964 and 1965 with financial help from the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the National Science Foundation of Washington, D.C. It is because of the generosity of these agencies that I have been able to develop and continue my understanding of the Kanuri people and their complex culture. Altogether I have spent over twenty-six months among the Kanuri and a number of years reading historical documents dealing with their pre-colonial kingdom in the Chad basin.

Over the years I have become indebted to a host of people who have contributed to my expanding knowledge of Bornu so that it would be impossible to give a complete list of those whose share in this book is a significant one. Professor C. W. M. Hart first encouraged and guided my work, and his approach to anthropology has colored and given direction to my own. In Nigeria, Sir Kashim Ibrahim, G.C.O.N., K.C.M.G., C.B.E., LL.B., Governor of Northern Nigeria, has through the years helped to make my visits to Bornu fruitful and intellectually exciting. The Bornu Native Authority and the Bornu Provincial Government have extended the warmest hospitality and courtesy to myself and my wife and encouraged us in our work. Their forbearance with my research and their constant willingness to cooperate has helped to make Bornu into what some of them have called "my second home." I cannot claim to know everything about Kanuri society and culture; what I have learned is due not only to the kindness of Bornu officials but to the friendship of hundreds of Kanuri who have never failed to answer my unending questions and sometimes naïve curiosity with patient explanation. Dr. and Mrs. Abraham Rosman who were also out in Bornu in 1957 carrying out field research gave invaluable aid as colleagues interested in many of the same problems. At closer range, both in Bornu during my first field trip, and later after we returned to North America in 1957, my wife has served as a constant critic and discussant of almost every fact and interpretation put forward in this book and in my other publications on Bornu. In a very real way I owe her a debt as my collaborator and fellow researcher. Finally I am indebted to Professor John Middleton and David Spain who have read and made many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this book.

R. C.

Evanston, Illinois
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There are many greetings which are adjusted to social rank, so that one can say "Hello" to a social inferior, to an equal, or to a respected superior, and receive a proper reply recognizing the same distinction. People from other areas of Nigeria and Europeans claim it is a difficult language to learn. But this is probably due to the fact that the most widespread language of Northern Nigeria is Hausa, and many outsiders find they can get along with Hausa in the cities and larger towns without having to make the effort to learn Kanuri. Certainly today most Kanuri school children know some Hausa, and facility with it is spreading throughout all of Northern Nigeria.

Distinctive Kanuri cultural features, things which are of unique Kanuri origin, are not necessarily vitally important things. But they are, if you like, diagnostic features that indicate Bornu-ness in contrast to the cultures of other closely related ethnic groups in the Sudan. Perhaps the most striking feature is the women's hair style. At its most resplendent, it resembles the form of a Trojan helmet made out of an enormous braided ponytail that begins as a crest at the front-center of the head and curves up over the head to end in a slight upward curl of the tail at the back. Today a few of the young school girls are beginning to give up this traditional Kanuri coiffure and are taking on instead the Shuwa-Arab style of a smooth top of the head with hundreds of small braids clinging tightly to the sides and back of the head, at the ends of which are either loose ringlets or a pageboy effect.

Other features which are unique to Bornu are their knives and calabash carvings. These items are also unique to each ethnic group in the region, as are tribal marks cut on the face. Thus many unique features of Kanuri traditional life are thought of locally by many peoples as differentiating criteria for separating one ethnic group from another. A Northern Nigerian going to a market in Jos, or Maiduguri, or Kano, can spot a Kanuri, Fulani, or a Hausa calabash design at a glance just as he can tell another person's ethnic group by his tribal marks, or spot a Bornu knife among a pile of others.

On the other hand, the inside of a Kanuri gentleman's household is not significantly different from the household of a man of similar rank, wealth, occupation, and education, who lives in Hausa country seven or eight hundred miles to the west of Bornu. They dress in a very similar manner, eat very similar food, and share many of the same beliefs and attitudes about what is the best way to live, make decisions, treat one's family, friends, superiors, and worship one's God. Thus although there are some clear-cut diagnostic features representative of Kanuri culture, the people share in a way of life that is practiced by millions in the Sudan, or southern savannah land border of the Sahara desert.

Gathering the Material

I first arrived in Bornu in January 1956 and stayed there until August 1957. My next contacts occurred in the summers of 1964 and again in 1965, and hopefully I shall return in the future to study specialized topics to deepen my understanding of this society as it changes and progresses in the modern world. During our first visit my wife and I spent most of our time in the small village of Magumeri about thirty-three miles northwest of the capital. This was our home base. From here we also visited other parts of the emirate, especially the larger village of

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Geidam in the north, where another anthropologist, Abraham Rosman, and his wife were working. Discussions with Dr. and Mrs. Rosman helped all of us to see many of the unique features of Kanuri life that stemmed from our particular towns as against more general Kanuri patterns of behavior that were widespread throughout the society. We also became acutely aware of the kinds of variations that could occur across communities as they varied in size, ethnic composition, and quality of the political leadership. At the end of the first field trip, my wife and I spent three months in the capital city of Maiduguri looking at government reports and district notebooks, and acquainting ourselves with many of the special activities that characterize courtly life at the center of the emirate.

In 1964 and again in 1965 I returned to Bornu. On my previous visit the country had been a colonial holding of Great Britain, now it was part of the independent nation of Nigeria. My task in this second visit was to gather statistics on marriage and on divorce rates. But it also gave me a chance to see old friends, and catch up on what had been happening locally since my last visit seven years earlier. Some changes were readily apparent. A large number of deep wells were sunk all over the province, and these now provide enough water for a greatly expanded livestock population. Everywhere the cattle are healthier, fatter, and above all much more in evidence. They block roads and are seen herded in large numbers to and fro wherever one wanders over the countryside. Furthermore the people are less afflicted by parasites because the deep water is uncontaminated, as much of it was not during my first visit. There is now a large modern abattoir and a ground-nut oil refinery in the capital city, and in late 1964 the Nigerian railway finally pushed through to Maiduguri to connect the Bornu capital with Nigeria's national railway system. On the other hand, detailed questions about various traditional practices indicated that there have been few changes at the cultural and social level. At the political level where there were English District Officers and other officials of the regional government, now these posts are filled by Nigerians, generally from other parts of northern Nigeria. However it is for the most part correct to use the present tense in describing Bornu, and when this is not true I will attempt to mention the special circumstances that have brought on the changes.

Magumeri, our home for seventeen months in 1956 and 1957, sits on top of one of the ridges of Bornu, and there is a steep climb onto it from the motor road that travels along the bottom of the ridge for most of the year. During the rains, the road runs along the sandy top of the ridge, to keep clear of the large muddy areas formed at the ridge bottom. Magumeri includes approximately 2000 people about half of whom live in surrounding hamlets within the boundaries of the village area. It is a district capital and thus has a two-room primary school, a court house, and the large compound of the district head who administers twenty-one village areas, containing 50,000 people, living in an area of approximately 850 square miles. The village has a weekly market on Sunday, and is divided up into a number of wards under the village area head who is also the political leader of its surrounding hamlets and officially the political subordinate of the district head. Except for the fact that it has a somewhat lower proportion of non-Kanuri compared to most others, Magumeri is a "typical" Bornu village in terms of its size, occupational ranges of the population, and influences it receives from the capital and the world beyond the emirate. Indeed this is why I chose to spend most of my time

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there. That it did not turn out to be "typical" in all respects is not surprising, given the relatively large numbers of people there are in Bornu and the range of variation that such a large population can quite normally exhibit.

For the first week or so in Magumeri, the Bornu Native Authority appointed a young man who was to serve as our interpreter and guide—telling the people our purpose in coming to live in their village and helping us to get settled into our new surroundings. At first the local Magumeri officials found it all hard to believe, and kept asking why we wanted to live right in the village, rather than reopening an old, deserted, and I suspected snake infested and ramshackle government rest house about a mile away. However, they politely accepted our firm desire to live in the village even if they disagreed with the idea. Soon I decided to live at the end of the plaza facing the district chief's compound, across the open 200 yards of sand which stretched between his house and mine. The interpreter helped with all these arrangements, and in the ten days he was with us I took down a rough outline of the entire culture using him as an informant. As an interpreter, he accompanied me to the compound of the village area head and we asked if I could take down his genealogy and that of some of his neighbors in order that people might become acquainted with the kinds of questions I would be asking later on. At the same time, my wife began compiling a short dictionary of Kanuri nouns, verbs, and useful phrases, using our interpreter as her major source.

For the next four months, we struggled to learn the language and to get our house built—it kept falling down all the time we lived in it—and to begin making a few friends. The first ten days had been so rich and fruitful that what came afterwards seemed all the harder to accept. Without the language, very little could be accomplished; we could watch but not ask questions about what it all meant. The local school teacher who knew very little English offered his help. He would teach us Kanuri, he said, help us to understand the customs of the people, if we would help him to learn English. And slowly this exchange blossomed into a close friendship that has lasted through the years. Slowly, too, little phrases of Kanuri conversation jumped out at us as understandable items from a background of unintelligible conversation. In about four months my wife and I could converse haltingly with one another, and in six months we were speaking—with an accent, with bad grammar, and a limited vocabulary—but we were speaking nonetheless.

During this first six months, several significant things happened that affected the course of our work. First, the district head who mistrusted us when we had arrived began to relax when nothing dire seemed to follow from our presence on his doorstep. Eventually he and I became friends and his acceptance of our presence in Bornu, and Magumeri in particular, along with his conviction that I was in fact studying the customs of his people, helped and many others followed his lead. Secondly, I became very ill with hepatitis, and had to leave Magumeri for two months. No one (we were told later) believed for a minute that we would ever return after such a dreadful illness—but we did. And our return was a triumphant one. For several days visitors poured in to tell us what had been happening during my illness, and what was going to happen, and so on. We had come home, we said, and Magumeri made us feel that it was indeed a homecoming.

Slowly but surely life settled into a pattern and my wife and I became identifiable members of the community and known throughout the entire emirate as "the Europeans of Magumeri."

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"the Europeans of Magumeri." This pattern involved interviewing and visiting households in Magumeri and its surrounding hamlets during the morning, asking questions about household life, farming, and the social relations within the household and between its members and the wider community. Along with attendance at ceremonies, these morning activities came to be defined locally as my "work." My wife, not a trained anthropologist, visited a number of her women friends in the mornings, and looked after household matters. However, she was a part of Magumeri women's society, and we gained insights from her friendships that would have been difficult for a man to achieve by himself. In the afternoon we very often visited with a group of the young men who were associates of the school teacher. They became our intimate friends, and were defined locally as such. During these sessions, we participated in the conversation, or listened, often breaking in to ask questions about the meaning of some event being discussed. Sometimes data collected elsewhere in the mornings, would be discussed with our friends—hiding the identity of the informant when possible—in order to more fully understand what it was that had been collected.

This rather regular schedule was punctuated with visits to see the district head, visits to other villages, and a trip into Maiduguri, the capital, every month for a day or two to obtain supplies for the household. Special events such as the visit of another chief, or a touring British official, also broke the regularity of our days. But in general time stopped. We were without newspapers, radio, television, and even our mail was collected only when we went in once a month to the city. In this way, news from the world outside Bornu reached us first through Kanuri perspectives. Thus when the Suez crisis began in 1957 we heard of it from a young cattle inoculator who was living in Magumeri and had brought a battery radio with him. He told us and a large crowd that the British had attacked and "were killing the Muslims," but that the Russians and the Chinese were supporting the Muslims and were going to kill all the British. For days we were asked the relative population figures of Great Britain, Russia, and China, and really did not get the story straight ourselves for a day or so.

Later, after more than ten months of fieldwork, I began thinking of gathering some questionnaire data on farming, marketing, status rating of occupations, and family budgets. The latter was attached to morning visits and became a part of the work in each household. A field assistant already trained in gathering statistical data on crops asked a set of questions of seventy-five farmers in three villages, including Magumeri, where he was carrying on a fertilizer demonstration. Later this same young man did some work collecting information on kinship behavior among a number of people throughout Bornu. Much later still, after we moved to the capital, we asked school officials there to allow us to question the Maiduguri school children which we did *en masse* using the help of school teachers and Dr. and Mrs. Rosman. All the pupils were asked questions about the status rating of occupations, and about their marriage preferences with particular ethnic groups. These questionnaire data were extremely useful since they could be utilized to check some major conclusions concerning a whole series of attitudes, as well as economic and kinship behavior which involved a great deal of variation across the population. However it is important to note that such highly selective data collection had to be done at the end of the field trip when we knew what questions to ask and could interpret answers in light of our broader understanding of the cultural context.

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rare circumstances women themselves initiate the proceedings by announcing the divorce, although this is usually done with a circumlocution such as when she says, as one woman did, "There is nothing holding us together but these gifts that you have given me. Take them. I wish to go." 593 586

About eighty to ninety percent of all marriages end in divorce, probably because it is such a simple affair. The husband in most cases simply tells the wife to go, saying "I divorce you." He does not say it three times, as is usual in Islamic countries, because the wife may return, for the Kanuri practice of Muslim marriage is such that, after saying "I divorce you," three times there should be no reconciliation or remarriage. Once a pronouncement of divorce has been made the woman leaves her husband's household and the marriage enters a special hundred-day period in which the woman cannot remarry although the man may do so. This is defined as a waiting period to see whether or not the woman is pregnant so that the man can claim the child. The woman generally returns to her *Iuwali* at this time and there is always some negotiation between the man and the *Iuwali* to see whether or not the marriage can be patched up. About one-third of all divorce pronouncements do end in reconciliation even though the husband most often divorces her again later on. It is interesting to note that unlike western society, practically no Kanuri divorce cases (perhaps one percent) go to the courts; thus it is impossible to get the records of divorce except through field study of actual cases. [779] [114]

When a divorce occurs children remain with their father unless they are still nursing. After nursing they are generally sent back to the father's household, although the period is sometimes stretched out for young girls who are trained by their mothers. Children of broken unions are cared for by a father's co-wife or by some other close relative of the father. Contacts with a divorced parent are always maintained and the child visits his or her mother regularly. This is especially true for boys who expect to take care of their mother when she is an elderly unmarried woman. Conflicts sometimes arise because a man's daughter does not return and the mother's relatives or one of her subsequent husbands might try to arrange a marriage without consulting her own father. If such consultations take place, however, no one feels put out and the man who arranged the marriage takes a portion of the bridewealth in payment.

Each spouse in a marriage maintains very close contacts with his or her own relatives. Presents are exchanged and visits back and forth between members of kin groups are very common. Children are named after relatives, especially grandparents, and in many cases go to live with them after weaning, or before the birth of a new baby in the family. Only in cases of long term marriage does a wife finally come to feel a part of and fully accepted by her husband's family. However when this does happen the wife can become a very powerful voice in the family, and her long and intimate association with her husband often means that she has become a permanent authority in the household. In one such case a senior wife had never been married to anyone else and had been married to her husband, a powerful man in the village, for thirty years. The man remarked that he made very few decisions without consulting this woman, and people recognized that she had a powerful position in village affairs. Such cases, however, are not common. Kanuri marriage involves a separation of the sexes not only by custom and tradition but as a result of the conflicts in marriage relations which produce tensions between husbands and 593 602 [553] 593

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Clothing, like food, is in the hands of the household head although, and as in the case of food, he is always pressured to obtain and distribute more than he can afford. At harvest time, or major religious ceremonies during the year, and at celebrations of *rites de passage* by household members, new clothing is in order and is expected by everyone. Clients and subordinates in nearby households expect gifts of clothing as well. Wealthy men may find it necessary to purchase several hundred men's robes a year just to satisfy their many dependents; on the other hand, a normal peasant householder can usually get by annually with under a half a dozen for male household members including himself and a similar number of women's robes for his wives.

Household heads must also organize and pay for repairs to compound walls and sleeping huts, fuel and equipment for cooking fires, and kerosene for the lamps. They must supply as well the ladies of the household with money for their fortnightly hair styling, perfumes, pomade for rubbing on their skin, and kola nuts. When someone is sick, they must consult the religious practitioner and the native doctor who diagnose the case, start the necessary prayers, and sell charms to effect a cure. Besides all this they must enter into community life, go to the weddings, naming ceremonies of friends, and have these friends come to their own ceremonies. Each time they attend affairs they and their household members must give gifts to those responsible for the ceremony. The more a man gives and the more often he goes to such ceremonies, the more successful and wealthy and contact-laden he is reputed to be. Most people are prudent and do not go beyond their means. Indeed the Kanuri term for "spendthrift" translates literally as "one who goes to many ceremonies."

Consumption at the household level is organized by the household head and carried out under his guidance and control. He is constantly purchasing more so he can distribute it more generously to more people; yet for the ordinary household the bulk of the expenditure, roughly sixty percent of the household's earning power, is for food, and the next largest item is clothing, at about fifteen percent. This leaves approximately twenty-five percent of the household earning capacity to take care of everything in cash and kind beyond the simple necessities of food and clothing.[2]

Households as Producers

Kanuri production is tied traditionally to two interrelated factors in the physical and social environment of Bornu. These are, first, the geographical and ecological characteristics of the area, and secondly, the way in which agricultural and nonagricultural pursuits complement one another in the economy. The Bornu area has a short rainy season from June to September and crop production is carried out during these months. Planting begins about the time of the first rains, and the first hoeing takes place shortly afterward. The second hoeing is carried on from the beginning of October to the end of November. Each hoeing requires between two to three weeks' work and harvesting may take as long as a month to a month and a half. Between these periods, beyond occasional scrutiny to see that straying

[2] These data and much of the other material for this chapter were obtained (a) from detailed budget studies in a small sample of twenty-two rural households, and (b) from a less detailed survey of seventy-five rural households in three villages in the Magumeri area.

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122 The field research on which the present study is based was financed by a Foreign Area Training Fellowship granted by the Ford Foundation. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Ford Foundation for enabling him to carry out the research, though he alone bears responsibility for the conclusions reached in this study.

900 A number of people at Yale University assisted the author at various stages of the research. Professor Edward M. Bruner helped in formulating the problem which served to orient the study. Professor George Peter Murdock initially acted as adviser for the dissertation. This role was later assumed by Professor Sidney W. Mintz, under whom the dissertation was completed. Professor John V. Murra read the completed manuscript. To all of these people the author expresses his thanks.

• 114 To the Kanuri people of Bornu Province the author owes a special debt of gratitude. Yerima Mustapha, the District Head of Geidam District, showed remarkable understanding of the author's purposes and assisted him in innumerable ways. To his many informants, and to the people of Geidam, the author expresses his thanks.

Dr. Bernice Rosman, the author's wife, shared in every step of the research, from the rigors of the field to the rigors of the dissertation. The author's debt is beyond expression.

128 Mrs. Evelyn Middleton, who typed the manuscript, has aided greatly in bringing it to its final form.

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361 648 through the district. There are no European officials permanently stationed in Geidam, though a young Assistant District Officer on his first tour of duty did spend three months in Geidam [366] in the course of the author's year of residence there. Along with the Government Rest House, the Government Reserve Area includes the canteens of the various European trading companies who have offices in Geidam, and the houses of their managers. 361 177 [439] There are six trading companies doing business in Geidam, three under the management of Europeans, and three under African managers. The three Europeans, two Cypriotes and one Greek (formerly a Swiss, then replaced by a Greek), represent the entire White population of Geidam. Two operate branch offices of larger companies; one is in business for himself. The three African managers are in charge of branches of large trading companies, two British (United Africa Company and John Holt) and one French company (Société de la Compagnie de Ouest Afrique). Thus, the small European population of the town, and the agents of the Western world who make their presence most felt, the colonial administration and the trading companies, are physically removed from the people of Geidam. They come periodically to do what they must in the town, and return to their own sections, and people of the town go out to them to deal with them. There is no opportunity for continual, indiscriminate interaction between [114] the Kanuri populace and these agents of the Western world. In order to do anthropological field work in such a situation, it became immediately apparent that it would be necessary to live

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114 361 177 in the town proper, in a Kanuri house, since it was obviously impossible to live as all other Europeans did, more than a mile from the Kanuri people, surrounded by fellow White men.

1. Foci of Communal activity.

36 If an archeologist living centuries in the future were to excavate the ruins of Geidam, he would be able to establish from the physical characteristics of the community that this was undoubtedly an urban community, provided that he excavated with great care. He would find a large area, the market-place, devoted to trade; specialized structures devoted to religious activity, in particular the large central mosque; and others devoted to the government bureaucracy, the largest of these being the Ajari, the 'palace' of the District Head. In addition, he would note great differences in the size of dwelling places or compounds, and would infer that households varied widely in size; [463] this would imply social stratification. Lastly, there would be revealed economic specialization in different sections of the town, indicating the presence of specialized craftsmen. On the basis of solely physical evidence, Geidam would be considered an urban community.

This view is strengthened considerably if one looks at the activities of the people of Geidam. However, as we are still concerned with the physical nature of the community, let us first examine the activities of the townspeople in relation to the various sections of the town, which serve as foci of communal activity.

124 the part of the investigator with respect to the variable of acculturation can have played little or no part in obtaining the present results, since the various groups and categories which were used in the study themselves differ in the areas of culture in which they are acculturated. There is no simple division into acculturated and unacculturated groups.

2. Measures of Acculturation.

121 Much of the year spent in the field in the town of Geidam
• 114 was devoted to work in two problem areas: delineation of community social structure, which was described above, and working out measures of acculturation. In the final three months spent in Geidam the actual data on which the present study is based
[122] were collected. Until that time it was necessary to acquire a general understanding of Kanuri culture, to learn the language, and to see the areas in which Kanuri culture was most affected by external influences.

125 Data on acculturation were acquired through a question-
124 naire-interview, administered in Kanuri to forty-four informants. The questionnaire comprises seventy-five parts, many of these long and complex questions requiring discursive answers. It took approximately two hours to interview each informant.
125 Thirty of the seventy-five questions were concerned with meas-
177 ures of acculturation. These are presented in Table XIV. It can be seen that the measures of acculturation refer to a wide variety of behavioral areas. These include: language; posses-

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 246]

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Preface

Field work for this study was carried out in Bornu Province,
122 Nigeria, from January 1956 to August 1957. The author is grateful to the Ford Foundation Area Training Program under whose financial support the field work was carried out. Through a grant from the Knapp Fellowship Fund of the University of Wisconsin, the writer was allowed an unencumbered year following the field work in which to analyse and write up the material.

114 Although the author takes full responsibility for the following pages, they could not have reached their present form without the generous help of a number of people. Prof. C. W. M. Hart helped plan and guide the field work as well as reading and advising on earlier drafts of the present study. His intellectual stimulus has served as a major impetus in the development of the writer's approach to the study of society. Professors D. A. Baerreis and M. L. Barnett have given encouragement and advice throughout the course of the project and helped the writer in innumerable ways both administratively and in matters of scholarship.

114
122 Periodic conversations in the field with Mr. and Mrs. A. Bosman, graduate students at Yale University, helped clarify many points about the Kanuri as well as indicating areas of uncertainty and ignorance which required further work. To Mallam Abdullah Yajuwa of the Bornu Department of Agriculture I owe a sincere debt of gratitude for his interest in the project and his well run surveys. His patience and forbearance with the insatiable curiosity of an anthropologist deserve special mention. The Wasiri, the Yerima and the Digma of Bornu also deserve special acknowledgement as men of affairs who spared us their

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 M514 Kanuri M514

114
/22 valuable time and used their influence on our behalf. Many others deserve some mention for the generous contributions they made not only to our work but to our well being. Among these were the Provincial Education Officer, Mr. H. O. H. Vernon-Jackson, Mr. Tony May, of the United Africa Company, Mallam Alhaji Dambos, headmaster of the Kaguneri Junior Primary School and his colleagues, Lawan Mina, the Village Head of Kaguneri, the Bornu Provincial Government for their cooperation in putting the public records of the Emirate at our disposal, and many others whose friendships and cooperation made our stay in Bornu not just the operationalizing of a research project, but a rich personal experiences.

114 My wife has contributed so much in the form of criticism, encouragement, editing, and information, both in the field and during the write-up, that there is no specific help for which she can be acknowledged, for she shared it all.

121 as against another. The data have been described as they were observed rather than as test data for any theory of society. Nevertheless the material to follow suggests that there may be more to the so-called "market modal view"(1) of the social system than its recent discreditors have led us to believe. This view emphasizes social relationships and roles as objects of choice in terms of the net satisfactions expected. The market model has been criticized because it tends to portray social interaction as overly contractual and overly rational. Furthermore it is claimed that social relations must be analyzed in relation to the values defining current role obligations or those internalized in personality, while economic relations are independent of such references.(2) 121 571 However the data to follow indicate that in Kanuri society many non-economic as well as economic relations are governed by what is most aptly described as "investment" and "return". Individuals perform certain roles for socially defined returns. When the performance of obligations is judged as insufficient then dissatisfaction arises which may result in a shift in social relations or a change in the performance within the relationship. The reader must judge for himself whether or not this is merely a "metaphorical construction",(3) or an adequate description of Kanuri social life.

• 114 123 The methods used in gathering data in the field fall into three categories: qualitative, quantitative and documentary. Qualitative methods of participant observation were used exclusively during the first eight months of field work. The writer and his wife lived in

(1) Hopkins, Terence K. Sociology and the Substantive View of the Economy in Trade and Market in the Early Empires, Polanyi, K., Arensburg, C.M. and Pearson, H. W. (eds.) p. 283.
(2) Ibid: p. 284
(3) Ibid: p. 284

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 M514 Kanuri M514

114
123 a medium sized rural Kanuri town, learning the language and making contacts among the local residents.(1)

In approximately four months the writer could carry on interviews in the language, and by the end of the eighth, an outline of political and economic structure in the area was gained, plus some understanding of kinship, cultural values, and household economics. Although participant observation techniques continued until the end of the field trip, it was now deemed possible to introduce some quantitative techniques into data collection. For this purpose, questionnaires 114 125 were designed on market involvement of peasant cultivators, kinship behaviour norms, marriage preferences among tribes, ranking of traditional and non-traditional occupations and a scheduled interview was made up concerning household income and expenditure. A Kanuri assistant was hired to conduct the surveys on market involvement of peasant cultivators and kinship behaviour norms. In addition, he kept records on the crop production techniques and amounts harvested as well as daily intake of the staple grain food, for seventy-five farmers in three towns.

114 The complexity of Kanuri society makes generalizations based on intensive work in only one community extremely precarious. Thus other parts of Bornu were visited, especially the capital Maiduguri, and Geidam, a district capital in the northern part of the Emirate. Side trips to Dikwa and Biu Emirate and Damboa and Dematuru districts helped to broaden the perspectives of observation made on the basis of a long term stay in Magumeri. Innumerable visits on horseback to small [184] hamlets helped in this respect as well. Finally, the variations possible in Kanuri social life were made even more apparent by the presence

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124 (1) An interpreter was employed for the first ten days and then depart-
191 ed leaving the writer and wife with only one person, the local school teacher, who could speak only a very little English.

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 M514 Kanuri M514

114
184 of another anthropologist, Mr. A. Rosman, who spent a large part of his field work time in the town of Geidam. Periodic conversations with Mr. Rosman, plus the exchange of visists and information contributed enormously to our understanding of the generality of some Kanuri traits as against the local peculiarities of others.

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[127] During the final three months of field work, the writer and his wife moved into the capital and devoted part of the time to an analysis of all available government records covering the colonial period in the area. Ethnographic work at the court of the Shehu and in Maiduguri as a whole was carried on at the same time. However, it is painfully evident that much more work in the capital, using the methods of urban sociology as well as anthropology, is needed to complete a study which the present work has only begun.

128 The work is in three parts. The first part introduces the people and the locality giving pertinent information of population, geography and ecology. Also included in this section is an historical sketch of the pre-British period as well as an account of the significant changes introduced by the colonial era.

The second part deals with interpersonal relations. Here kinship behaviour norms are related to social interaction in the community at large, and these are described as they operate in the local residence groups. Marriage relations illustrate how the norms of behaviour operate between groups and individuals in the husband-wife relationship. The life cycle material then documents the manner in which individuals are recruited into and live within the small and large scale social structures of the society.

The third part deals with the wider scaled forms of social life. Stratification by various status dimensions is discussed and it

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Unlike some of the larger district capitals, Magumeri has almost no mud houses. Conical, thatched roofed dwellings inside compounds having grass mat walls are the rule. Only the District Head's and the Alkali's (Muslim judge) compounds contain any mud walled dwellings, and only the District Head's compound has mud walls. In the larger villages and District capitals, mud walls are more common as are mud houses. This gives Magumeri village a more rural appearance than many other capitals, since it is in the small villages and hamlets that this type of house predominates.

621 [273] In Magumeri the pagan quarter in which millet beer is made is right in the village. More usually pagan quarters are at the extreme edge of a village or at some remove altogether from the main settlement.

184 This then is Magumeri. Its representativeness of Kanuri society in general is probably as good as any other village in Bornu. [114] After having visited ten other district capitals, stayed in another for nearly a month, and the capital of the Emirate for three months, the writer is keenly aware of local differences but just as aware of the similarities in social life among all people who consider themselves Kanuri. These differences are especially pertinent in relation to the rural/urban dichotomy and between the upper and lower classes of the society. The writer is only too aware that any attempt at all-inclusive generalizations becomes perilous in the face of these ever present differentials in Kanuri life as a whole.

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651 in the Mediterranean, ensconced in Zinder (a tributary of Bornu) as the representative of the Bornu monarch. A slave raid carried on into Bornu territory by the monarch of this petty state, for the purpose of allowing him to pay some of his personal debts, was condoned by the Bornu "consul" because a portion of the spoils from the raid was to be sent to the Shehu. Richardson also expressed the opinion that much of the real power in Zinder was in the hands of the Shehu's Representative rather than with the local authorities.(1)

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651 From the earliest records extant of the Kanuri empire in Kanem right up until the arrival of the British, a system of tax exemption obtained called the Mahram. Although it most often applied to religious mallams, who were recognized in this way for their esoteric knowledge in matters of law and religion, special services to the king were sometimes [212] rewarded in the same way. These exemptions were always recorded in writ- [451] ing, so that when the British arrived and began instituting their own form of universal taxation many of these documents, some claiming 990 years of • [114] exemption, turned up. They were collected, translated and subsequently published by Palmer.(2)

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692 Judicial power was divided between the political leaders and the Muslim Alkalai (judges), as it is today. In the kingdom of the Mais centered at Birni Gazargamo, traditions tell of the Mainin Kanendi, literally the second to the king. This man was the chief judge of the state and, it is said, the second most important man in the realm.

In the house and the quarter of the Mainin Kanendi were twelve [693] other judges, who with himself constituted the high court of the realm. In the larger towns, the king appointed local mallams to act as judges, from

(1) Richardson, J. Mission to Central Africa; Vol. II, pp. 182ff; 1853
(2) Palmer, H.R. op. cit. pp. 12-51.

854 shirt, and nothing below the waist, except when they are swaddled to the mother's back. When the baby defecates or urinates indoors, as is often the case, it is cleaned up with no great show of alarm, 853 until the end of the first eighteen months. Breast feeding occurs on demand, and is used as a pacifier.

Childhood

862 With the onset of childhood, which is formalized at eight- [858] een months by weaning, the overt pressures of socialization begin for • [114] the young child. No systematic data were gathered on the effects of this formal change-over from breast-feeding. Everyone knew of a wide range of variation in reaction on the part of the infants; some babies wean easily, others require much more training. In the latter case, the more stringent techniques are utilized, but still with a matter of fact, unperturbed attitude towards the inevitability of the weaning procedure.

In most cases the child has a female grandparent either in the compound or nearby. If not, then a senior woman of the compound or of the family helps with the weaning by offering her dry breast as a pacifier. The mother spreads the process over several months by constantly attempting to replace the breast with a cup. When the child runs to its mother desirous of the breast, the parent refers to it negatively, as dirt, or even excrement. With difficult cases bitter tasting grounds of brown leaves are put on the breasts to discourage continued efforts by the child to obtain the mother's milk.

597 It is just after weaning that most Kanuri adoptions take place. A very rough estimate of adoptions, taken from genealogical data, would put the figure at somewhere between 35-45% for the present

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is not perceived by them as being in conflict with their lack of direct power and authority in the state.

The result of this coordination of lower statuses into a peasant-commoner class and high statuses into a ruling upper class is the differentiation of Kanuri society into two broad sub-division, that of the upper and the lower classes. Language, wealth, power and authority, occupations, manners and etiquette all differ within these two large divisions. The differences are not, however, either/or distinctions. They can be seen as a large number of recognizable signs which tend to place the person higher or lower on a scale of class attributes. It is at this point that class, or rather its cultural characteristics, become not just a segmentation of society into large units, but a dimension of status. This process occurs through the simulation of class attributes, generally in an upward direction. For in Bornu, the appearance of upper class membership enhances an individual in his own eyes and those of his fellows.(1) Thus the acquisition of items of upper class culture, such as large flowing light-coloured robes, or a fine horse, or many supporters and subordinates, or more elegant manners and speech, give a man higher status. But it is the dimensions of social stratification discussed above, rather than these cultural expressions, which are the underlying conditions for status. Thus if a person does not have a high status occupation, or is not of a sedentary Muslim tribe, or possess real wealth that he uses properly, or behave in all the other ways necessary for him to obtain high status, then the acquisition of some items of upper class culture merely constitute some blurring and

[114] [171]

(1) Nadel, S.F. A Black Byzantium (1947) and The Concept of Social Elites, UNESCO Bull. of Social Science, Number 8 (1956) has made this same point for Nupe, and on a theoretical level as a characteristic of elites in general, i.e. that they are copied by the rest of the population.

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[171] levelling processes between the two large segments of the society. It is because of this status aspect of class that Kanuri, like ourselves, have a ludicrous image of the arriviste - the person who has some of the attributes of upper class society, but who can never learn all of them, for he is not "to the manor born".

• 114
562 This account of the social organization of Bornu has been heavily weighted towards the male society. This is due admittedly to the primary male associations of the anthropologist. However, it can also be put down to the strongly male-centred framework of the social structure.

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562 The dimensions of status discussed above, of tribe, occupation, wealth, birth, rural/urban residence and class, hold as well for women as for men. But for the most part (leaving aside highly independent women, who tend to create their own status) a woman's social position can be more fully understood by tracing her relationship to the various males in her patrilineage, and her married life. Briefly, a woman receives relatively high or low status from three sources, (1) her agnatic descent group and its status in the society, (2) the status of her husband, and (3) her personal wealth. The interrelation of these three factors changes through time for each woman as well as varying from woman to woman, but they are the basis of judgements by self and others which set a woman high or low in the society. It will be noticed that (1) and (2) both refer not to the woman's status, but to that of males to whom she is related either by marriage or descent.

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571 It is claimed that traditionally the women in Bornu were more highly organized than at present. There were titled heads to a total association of women, who were organized in similar manner to the

634 647 662 one, before he was re-stationed to the capital city by the N.A. He had arrived several years ago in Magumeri as the jail keeper and the DH had given him a place to live within the walls of his own residence. In consequence almost all of the jailer's friendships and social relations were with people of the DH's extended household organization. This created a gap between the jailer and the other N.A. officials who felt that he was not completely trustworthy as a confidential friend, since gossip and criticism of the DH - a common topic of conversation - might be dangerous in his presence. Finally in 1955, the DH gave the jailer a young virgin of his household over whom he had marriage dispensation rights. This tied the relationship much tighter, and had the jailer stayed on in Magumeri, he would have been one of the few N.A. officials whom the DH could count on for subservient behaviour. (1)

The D.H.'s Relations to the Center

631 634 642 The formal and informal links of the DH to the capital are extremely complex and are only treated here in summary form. (2)

Formally the DH is responsible to only one body in the political organization of Bornu, viz. the Shehu-in-Council. This body under the chairmanship of the Wazirí (the Chief Councillor) decides on the policies of the State, draws up the annual budget, heads up the various departments of the N.A., acts as a court in trying cases of N.A.

[648] (1) This move was not due to machinations in the N.A. A new, young British officer was at the time zealously working on the Bornu prison system and felt that more warders were needed in Maiduguri, which soon became the accepted policy. In the colonial service of Northern Nigeria, shifts and changes of various kinds can be labelled "improvements" in Reports, and the young officer receives some merit for his conscientiousness. C.f. the picture given by Joyce Cary, in his novel Mr. Johnson, of the British officers in Northern Nigeria, each with his own peculiar "improvement" enthusiasm.

[114] (2) A separate study of these relations is being prepared in collaboration with Prof. A. G. Frank, comparing the role of the DH with that of the Russian industrial manager.

643 lower rank, that the Shehu had a good deal to say in the appointment of new DH's, and could operate as a bulwark to protect office holders whose connection to the palace and/or Bornu tradition made them feel some reliance on the monarch's protection.

643 648 [114] That this interpretation is open to the charge of ethnocentricism the writer is keenly aware, for it is the avowed British policy to create in Bornu a constitutional monarchy of the English variety, while making the Waziri and the rest of the Council the effective administration of the state. Thus the interpretation is in line with European policy. Perhaps the power situation only looks this way and is in [829] reality quite different. This much can be said: high placed Bornu officials agreed with this trend and for rational reasons. They argued that the state functions were becoming extremely complicated, and that only trained, worldly men, who understood not only Bornu, but Bornu in relation to Nigeria, could adequately do the job. The British, however, are inconsistent in their policy, for they feel very strongly about having somebody who can speak English as the next Shehu, while the Kanuri leaders want a particular well loved older man who is known for his view of the monarchy as a ceremonial rather than an authoritative role. If the present Shehu dies (he is 85) before the British leave, the Kanuri may find themselves with a younger, more ambitious Shehu, who will attempt to affect the running of the state.(1)

645 647 Bornu Emirate besides having traditional chiefs also has the formal structure of a western civil service. Under the Shehu's Councillors are the various N.A. departments. Under the chairmanship of the Waziri, each Councillor is responsible for one of the N.A. departments whose titles - forestry, sanitation, agriculture, education, public

(1) The British have the power of veto on appointments, so that although the Kanuri may put up names, the British can, by using this

[Footnote continues on p. 258]

12 Besides the usual anthropological procedure of participant observation, two other methods were used in obtaining information on economic life in Bornu. Firstly, a sample of seventy-five cultivators, chosen partly by their local political leaders and partly by personal consent,(1) was observed and questioned by a field assistant on agricultural production, food consumption, livestock and land tenure. The sample was drawn from three towns: Hagumeri, Ngubura and Chingowa: each roughly six miles from the other points of a triangle. Farm plots were measured off, dates of planting, weeding and harvesting were recorded, and the produce from one acre of millet and one of groundnuts weighed for each cultivator. As reported by the farmers themselves, and checked by the interviewer, the sample consisted of the following occupational groupings:

TABLE X

[115]

Occupation	Number	Percentage of Sample
Farmers	25	33.3
Craftsmen #	16	21.3
Traders	17	22.7
Political and Religious Specialists	17	22.7
	75	100.0

Includes 4 "herders" - persons who tend other peoples livestock, mostly sheep and goats, for a fee, as their non-farming specialty.

Secondly, using intensive interviews and observation, the annual budgets of twenty-two household heads were constructed by extrapolating from daily and weekly figures on income and expenditure in cash and kind, as well as reported crop production.(2) No sampling procedures were used in gathering this material, since the traditional method of gaining rapport with informants was a major criterion in

(1) They were primarily involved in a demonstration of the potential improvement of farm yields with the use of superphosphate fertilizer.

[114] (2) A similar but more extensive (numerically) method has been used by Smith, M.G., The Economy of Hausa Communities of Zaria, 1955.

(2)

12 in choosing households. An attempt was made, however, to obtain some degree of representativeness of the Bornu rural economy. Thus the budgets range from that of a single young man, just barely supporting himself in food and clothing, to the expenditures (not income) of a District Chief.

128 Before moving on to a detailed analysis of Kanuri production, consumption and distribution, it is necessary to give a brief outline of 592 Kanuri economic activities. The household group is the basic economic unit. This group is a nuclear or polygynous family living sometimes in a compound, at other times forming part of a larger compound. Its economic independence of other units depends upon whether or not it is a part of a larger extended household organization. But whether or not this is the case, the family unit under its male head maintains its own farmland, engages in its own dry season work, owns its own tools, animals, cooks its own food, and is treated as a taxable unit by the local political leaders.

462 592 Within the household, women cook, draw water for the household, help on the farm (unless they are in seclusion), raise garden crops in the compound, thresh, pound, and grind grain, sweep and clean the compound, keep chickens and ducks, and engage in petty trade. The major contribution of women to the household is their labour in cooking [434] and help on the farm. Income derived from the sale of garden produce or the sale of cooked foods are considered to belong to the woman herself.

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[114] (1) For experimental validation of the reliability of this method see:
(a) Honigman, J. and I. Sampling Reliability in Ethnological Field Work, SJA, Vol. 11, (1955) pp. 282-287.
(b) Honigman, J.J. and Carrera, R., Another Experiment in Sample Reliability, SJA, Vol. 13, (1957) pp. 99-102.

241 464 571 the surest safeguards against labour shortages due to sudden (and common) divorces. This is the reason why people with longer associations in one place, and stronger ties of kinship in the community are less vulnerable economically to the high divorce rate than newcomers, or those with their primary social ties outside Magumeri. The exception to this generalization is, of course, the upper class who can either afford to use wage labour, or utilize the subservience of followers.

433 435 Variations in price bring about fluctuations in farming activities. A higher price of millet one year induces a somewhat greater interest by rural and urban dwellers in the production of food grains. On the other hand, an increase by Government of groundnut prices paid to producers causes greater interest and some increase in acreage devoted to cash cropping. Several city dwellers who had not farmed for periods of two to six years told the writer that they were either going to go themselves, or send a subordinate, to the bush the following year to raise millet, because the 1956-57 price had risen as high as 39/- to 41/- per bag.

433 435 458 Besides this year to year fluctuation, there has been a steady rise in the Bornu economy over the past two decades. From 1938 to 1957 the prices in millet and groundnuts have been as follows:(1)

TABLE XIII

	Millet (to consumer) shillings per bag ø	Groundnuts pounds per ton to producer ø
1938	15	5
1957	30	33
Percentage increase	100%	660%

ø Maiduguri market (average)
ø General price for Bornu

[114] (1) Figures for 1938 taken from Economic Assessment Report (1938), file ø3014, Bornu Provincial Government Office, Maiduguri. General prices for 1957 are taken from observations in the Maiduguri, Geidam, Damaturu and Magumeri markets.

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

114 TITLE OF THESIS The Structure of Kanuri Society

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[p.361]

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
MS14 Kanuri MS14

829 This triviality is supported by traditional notions of cultural
779 and social change. It has often been said that Muslims are tied
to their traditional ways because of the fatalism inherent in
[114] their religious beliefs. Unfortunately this is an overgeneral-
ization that explains very little, and certainly not the course of
events described above. The Kanuri *are* Muslim, and they
often *do* make fatalistic statements. But, their fatalism always
concerns areas of total impotence as these are conceived of by
[369] the speaker. Thus rural peasants speak in a fatalistic way about
[665] the political organization of Bornu, although this is not the case
with many urban persons who belong to, or support, reform parties.
Or again, fatalism may be expressed over death, or knowledge
of God, or the origin of the world, or its future. Fatalism is
never referred to, however, for areas of behaviour that the in-
dividual construes to be susceptible to change by human efforts.
829 This is especially true of two closely related areas of social life,
557 (a) the economic sphere, and (b) social relations. The Kanuri
571 believe that it is possible and desirable to increase economic
status by one's own efforts. The preferred route to economic
betterment is not via technology, although this is important, but
by improving social relations. Thus to become a truck driver,
one needs workable relations with people who are drivers, so
that the status of apprentice may by achieved. That lorries are
a technological improvement over horses and donkeys is easily
[779] perceived and accepted. That is to say, the Kanuri are not
against change because as Muslims they accept the traditional
world as a manifestation of God's will. They do believe, how-
ever, that individual advancement is gained primarily through
profitable social relations, and only secondarily through tech-
nology.

241 It should also be noted in this respect that the Magumeri peas-
433 ants never at any time voice any dissatisfaction with the quantity
592 of their crop yields *using customary techniques*. Complaints are
heard but these always have to do with other aspects of farm
production more closely related to family and household organiz-
ation. Traditionally, and this is so today, crop yields are in-
creased through expanding one's acreage under cultivation. For
all peasants questioned this is accomplished through the expansion
of their household size, either by taking more wives, or client
1

1 [i.e., that dictatorial powers were not invoked over the decision to use or not to use fertilizer, thus defining the whole matter as trivial and unimportant in the minds of the people. -- Analyst]